S-1 NEW ORLEANS ITEM

SATURDAY NEW ORLEANS

S-1 11/4/61

GRAVES DECORATED

Castro Foes Pay Tribute To Invasion Dead Here

By DAVE SNYDER

Jesus Vilachao and Ruben Vera, neither 20 years old, stuck it out for 48 hours on a swampy, bullet-swept beach in the Bay of Pigs—never one of Cuba's tourist attractions.

Like 20 others, they swam to a small fishing boat and paddled with their hands as tracer bullets from Castro's planes and shore batteries blasted at them.

After 15 days with practically no food and no water the fugitives from a doomed attempt to oust the Cuban strongman were spotted not far off the Louisiana coast by an American merchant ship.

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HELP DID NOT COME soon enough for Vilachao, 17, and Vera, 18, who died on board the Atlantic Seaman. In fact, only 10 of those who left the beach to swim a mile to the fishing boat are alive today.

Vilachao and Vera, along with another victim of the abortive invasion, Enrique Cossio, are buried in the Garden of Memories on Air-Line hwy.

Two representatives of the Cuban Revolutional Revolutionary Front in New Orleans placed flowers at the small head stones of Vilachao and Vera and at the mausoleum burial place of Cossio this week.

At the same time they vowed a return to Cuba and top defeat of Castro.

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AT THE GRAVES of Vilachao and Vera, who are buried side by side in the cemetery, Sergio Aracha, delegate of the Cuban Revolutionary Front in New Orleans, said:

"We will never forget them. We hope that the people of New Orleans and of the United States will not forget that the [illegible] people of Cuba is [illegible]."

"One day," said Aracha, "we will accomplish what they [illegible] to see—free[illegible] and [illegible] Cuba.

—States-Item photo.

CARLOS QUIROGA places a Cuban flag at the headstone of Jesus Vilachao, who died following the April 17 attempt to oust Castro, while SERGIO ARCACHA places flowers on the grave.

"The Bay of Pigs was just a battle lost. In the near future we expect to be fighting again . . . until Castro will be thrown out of Cuba."

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THE BOAT that took the defeated members of the [illegible] party out of the Bay of Pigs was about 20 feet long and was equipped with a motor that the men never succeeded in getting to run.

At first, according to a survivor of the ordeal who now makes his home in Miami, the main problem appeared to be one of reaching one of the U. S. warships not too far away.

The survivors began to paddle frantically with their hands and with two small boards they found in the bottom of the boat.

They were startled to see the ships turn and leave the bay area, but followed doggedly, believing the ships would be waiting outside in open water for them.

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WHEN THE SHIPS were not there, they headed in the general direction of Yucatan in Mexico. Their threats already were parched from the lack of water.

Somehow they missed the coast and drifted toward the United States.

On the 13 days the men battled to stay alive, they were passed by nine different boats and at one point a plane, its occupants apparently curious, followed at a safe distance for two days.

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THE MEN SHOUTED and waved their arms until they were weak, but the boat came no closer and, finally turned away and disappeared.

The first man died six days after the ordeal began, and each day took new victims. As they died, they were lowered into the sea.

For those who survived, the ordeal was over at 5:07 p.m. on May 4 when the merchant ship took them aboard.